

COMPTON—THE HOME OF G. F. WATTS.

IN a charming Surrey village, lying about four miles from Guildford, beneath the Hog's Back, the great painter found his last earthly home; and here one may learn to know him—reverently, if yet with only dimly-comprehending vision—for many of his greatest works are here, and the spirit of the great master seems to brood over the whole place. To those to whom the symbolism of art means the highest of which art is capable, the criticisms sometimes bestowed upon Watts, from the purely decorative, or so to speak, 'technical' point of view—as, for example, in the incorrect foreshortening of a limb—fall away as of little value. The impression that remains strongest with us after this visit is a sense of extraordinary power and force. The "Love Trumphant" makes one want to shout a song of triumph; and "Progress" is full of this same vital power. "Love and Life," "Evolution," "Esau and Jacob" are here, and that haunting picture, entitled "B.C.", with the woman's eyes a perfect study of an unawakened soul, yet haunted with the mystery of existence.

Full of infinite pathos is the "Whence? Whither," the little child coming from "the great deep," with arms outstretched, and more of the "burden of the mystery" than the "clouds of glory" in its face. Is this the spiritual child of the nineteenth century?

After the pictures, of which I have only mentioned a few, the beautiful mortuary chapel is alone worth a day's pilgrimage, for it is a feast of colour and design. That wonderful 'bronze' blue, seen so often in Watts' pictures, and a lovely kind of crimson flame-colour are the predominant colours, and the beautiful angels and small plaques between, representing different qualities and virtues, were designed by, and the whole carried out under the direction of the painter, who lies in this quiet and beautiful spot.

One must not leave without visiting the potteries, where some lovely things are to be seen, many designed by Mrs. Watts, among them some fascinating pot-pourri jars, with the blue and flame-colouring of the angels' wings in the mortuary chapel, and such candlesticks and lamps as one seems to attach to Florence Nightingale in the picture of "The Lady with the Lamp," or to the "Foolish Virgins."

E. M. F. W.

SOME BIRD NOTES.

LIST OF BIRDS SEEN.

SOUTH DEVON.—FEBRUARY 20TH TO MARCH 17TH, 1908.

Laridæ.—Great Black-backed Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Herring Gull, Common Gull, Black-headed Gull, Kittiwake, Little Gull.

Ardeidæ.—Common Heron.

Colymbidæ.—Great Northern Diver.

Pelecanidæ.—Common Cormorant, Green Shag.

Alcinæ.—Razorbill.

Podicipedidæ.—Dabchick.

Charadriidæ.—Redshank, Sanderling, Lapwing

Scotopacidæ.—Curlew.

Anatidæ.—Mallard, Mute Swan, Teal.

Corvidæ.—Magpie, Rook, Carrion Crow, Jackdaw.

Falconidæ.—Common Buzzard, Sparrow Hawk.

Columbidæ.—Wood Pigeon, Rock Dove.

Rallidæ.—Moorhen.

Turdinæ.—Blackbird, Missel Thrush, Fieldfare, Robin, Thrustle.

Sturnidæ.—Starling.

Alaudidæ.—Lark.

Emberizinae.—Yellow Hammer.

Accentorinae.—Hedge Sparrow.

Fringillinae.—House Sparrow, Chaffinch.

Motacillidæ.—Pied Wagtail, Meadow Pippit.

Paridæ.—Great Tit, Blue Tit, Long-tailed Tit, Coal Tit, Marsh Tit.

Troglodytidæ.—Wren.

Phasianidæ.—Pheasant.

NOTES.

THE GULLS.—The Great Black-backed Gull, being somewhat of a bully, is not popular among his kind. Generally, if he joins the society of other gulls on the mud-flats, he is left severely alone, the other gulls gathering into small groups at short distances from him. He does not seem to mind, however, and shows no disposition to join these more sociable groups, conscious, perhaps, that his isolated position gives him a certain amount of distinction, which the more gregarious gulls lack. Like the thrush, these birds attract their prey by pattering on the mud or sand with their feet, and when the unwary sand-eels or lug-worms, etc., appear, seize them before they can again take refuge in their burrows.

It was interesting to watch the gulls flying down the estuary just about sunset, to their roosting-places by the open sea. At about 4 p.m., they used to collect in large numbers on the mud-flats, and if startled, rise up in such crowds, that from a little distance the effect was that of a severe snow-storm.

The larger gulls—Herring, Common, Great and Lesser Black-backed—sleep on the rocks and cliffs along the coast; the smaller ones—Black-headed, Kittiwake, and Little Gull—roost on the water, just outside the Bar.

GREAT NORTHERN DIVER.—Most of these had left for their breeding haunts in the North, but we were fortunate enough to see one or two specimens. Like the ducks and cormorants, they fly with their necks stretched out in a straight line.

THE CORMORANTS.—These birds are looked upon as great enemies by the fishermen. The Green Shag is said to con-

sume seven pounds of fish a day, and the Common Cormorant considerably more.

On March 6th we first saw Shags with crests. This is assumed by the male bird during the breeding season only, but not, I think, till after the bird is two years old.

Cormorants have a curious habit of perching on the top of a post, and remaining there, flapping their wings in a most unhappy manner.

The flight is straight and rapid, and full of a business-like determination to "get there," which led to their being christened by a friend of mine, "Late-for-dinner birds," a name which suits them admirably. They generally fly quite low over the water, consequently they get along much better than the gulls in a wind. It is interesting to watch the latter endeavouring to find the lighter currents in a strong wind, but it often makes one sympathetically tired to see how hopeless some of their struggles are. By-the-bye, it is useful to remember, when stalking sea-birds, to approach them always from the windward, as they invariably rise against the wind in order to get proper leverage, and so fly towards you, instead of away.

THE MUTE SWAN.—Five flew past the hotel one morning, quite near to the windows. The curious noise made by these birds in flight is caused by the legs flapping against the tail.

THE COMMON HERON.—One of the prettiest sights that I have ever seen, and one of which I made a mental note, and packed it away to be used as a "sensation sweet" when occasion required, was about fourteen herons perched among the branches of some dark Scotch pines, above the water of the estuary. The day was windy; dark grey clouds were banked up behind the pines, but on these the sun was shining, lighting up the plumage of the tall birds, and making them stand out in strong contrast against the dark foliage of the pines. Herons have an intense dislike for

wind, and had congregated among these pines (which were quite near to the heronry, but less exposed) for shelter.

I watched a most amusing little drama one day which took place below the windows of our hotel. A young Heron came down the estuary to feed among the many small creatures left on the mud-flats by the receding tide. His approach was heralded by much screeching and bad language from six gulls, who followed in his wake, hurling maledictions at him, of which he seemed perfectly oblivious. When he settled, the gulls did the same, but at a respectful distance from him, and most of them on the water, continuing to talk against him. Presently he rose to seek "fresh fields and pastures new," and the gulls scattered in all directions, in the most ignominious manner. The heron sailed away majestically, the gulls rallied and once more followed, but this time one Herring Gull, more courageous than his comrades, attacked the heron from behind as he flew, dealing savage blows at the base of the tail, of which, however, the latter appeared to take no notice.

Sometimes, when attacked like this, herons utter a very curious cry, rather harsh and sharp. Generally the gulls leave them in peace higher up the estuary, near to the heronry, as if they considered that they had a right to fish there; but I have seen them worried even there. Curiously enough, the gulls do not seem to mind the cormorants, much worse offenders as they are in the matter of poaching. Perhaps there is a family feud between the two races, or a natural antipathy like that of horses for donkeys, on account of the long legs and curious appearance of the heron.

BIRD BOOKS.—For those who cannot afford to get Seebohm, I would recommend Howard Saunders' "Manual of British Birds," or, less expensive still, Hudson's "British Birds," both excellent, though the former is, of course, much the greater authority.

D. B.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

DEAR EDITOR,

I have been thinking for a long time about writing to the students to try and get them interested in the work here. I am working entirely for one parish now, although I still live on at the Settlement, and my work is almost entirely among children belonging to the Sunday School. We have the children in the Parish Room once a week (boys on Thursday and girls on Monday) for about an hour and a half, from 6 p.m., to play and work. The girls sew, knit, etc., and are easily kept busy and happy, but the boys are more difficult to entertain. The little ones play with toys, and some do Smyrna rugs and a few baskets. The great difficulty is our lack of funds to buy material, and also the constant want of new toys. I have been wondering whether Miss Mason would be willing to let the students help us as a body, and look upon us as a kind of mission of their own. They could perhaps interest their children in us, and we should be so glad of cast-off toys, books, etc. I am thinking of writing to the magazine about it, and trying to get the ex-students to interest themselves in our children. If every student sent us 6d. a year we should be quite rich, and could do wonders for the children. At present I get between forty and fifty children each night, and have one helper. What I am longing for just now is an efficient helper, who could teach wood-sloyd to the big boys, aged from twelve to fourteen. We have lost many of our big boys because there has been nothing much for them to do when they came. They made some baskets, but they are tired of that, besides which it was rather unsatisfactory as I could not give them the proper amount of attention, and Hoxton boys cannot sit quiet and wait patiently for their turn to come. Another thing I should like to start is a children's library, so that the children could come on an